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SUBJECT: AHTISAARI COMES TO NATO AND OUTLINES WAY FORWARD  
ON KOSOVO STATUS PROPOSAL

REF: SECSTATE 18717

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On February 16, UN Special Envoy for Kosovo, (UNSEK) Martti Ahtisaari updated the NAC and non-NATO KFOR troop contributors on the Kosovo status process and his vision for the way forward. Ahtisaari said that prospects for a negotiated settlement by both sides were exhausted. The only way forward, therefore was his proposed settlement which he presented to the parties during the February 2 visits to Belgrade and Pristina. Ahtisaari will begin consultations with the parties in Vienna on February 21, at which point they will be afforded one last opportunity to suggest changes. Ahtisaari is planning on hosting one final high-level meeting of the parties in Vienna in early March, indicating March 10 as a likely date. He hopes to submit his comprehensive package to the U.N. Security Council by the end of March. END SUMMARY

12. (SBU) SYG: Opening Remarks: NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer (SYG) said that during his February 15 trip to Kosovo he met with members of Kosovo,s Unity Team, including President Sejdiu, Prime Minister Ceku, Kosovo Serb leaders in Mitrovica, U.N. Special Representative for Kosovo, Joachim Rucker, and COMKFOR. The SYG reiterated NATO,s full support for Ahtisaari and the process, while emphasizing that KFOR remains ready to maintain a safe and secure environment during the transition period. The SYG said he stressed that the partition of Kosovo was not an option and that Kosovo,s government must stay united. The SYG said based on his meetings that it was clear that the Kosovo Serbs remain apprehensive about the future.

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STATUS TALKS UPDATE  
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13. (SBU) Ahtisaari outlined progress in the talks since his last visit in October noting that this is the third time he has briefed the NAC. He again thanked the Alliance for KFOR,s role in providing a forceful and visible presence, particularly north of the Ibar River. He hoped his proposed settlement could bring peace and stability to the region and again called on NATO\*in coordination with a future EU/ESDP mission\*to fulfill the lead role in the building of a new Kosovo Security Force (KSF) and the disbandment of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). Ahtisaari said that a negotiated compromise between the two parties is an illusion as both sides have hardened their positions. His proposal, while not ideal, was realistic and reflected attempts to incorporate proposals by both sides. He emphasized that two thirds of the document dealt with minority rights and calls for the continued presence of the international community until such time as responsibility for protection of minority rights could be handed over to the Kosovo authorities. He made clear that following consultations by both parties in Vienna and a possible follow on high-level meeting between the two parties in early March, he intends to bring his proposal to

the U.N. Security Council for its consideration by April 1.

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SECURITY POST-STATUS  
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¶4. (SBU) Ahtisaari reiterated points he had made to the NAC in October on NATO's future role post-status as the international military presence in Kosovo. He stated that NATO and KFOR would take on the new task of building and training a new Kosovo Security Force that would reach initial operating capability within a year following the final settlement. NATO would have to work closely with the international civilian representative and the Kosovo authorities to develop a formal selection process that would vet potential candidates for the new force. He further said that NATO would have the executive authority over both the KSF and the KPC, including disbandment and reintegration of former KPC personnel back into civil society. He called for a strong NATO-EU link during the transition and implementation phases of the settlement.

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PERMREP REACTION LARGELY POSITIVE  
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¶5. (SBU) Many of the PermReps led by the Contact Group members, expressed support for Ahtisaari, stressing the importance of international unity, and emphasized the importance of a closer and deeper relationship between NATO and the EU on Kosovo. DCM Olson delivered talking points (REFTEL) echoed by the U.K. and the Dutch emphasizing to the Council that further delay risked instability and would only encourage radicals on both sides as witnessed by the riots in Pristina on February 10. PermReps from Bulgaria, Greece, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden added that they were

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hopeful that the upcoming consultations in Vienna would enable both parties to achieve a more balanced negotiated agreement and that there be some flexibility in timelines should there be constructive progress between the two parties. The Turkish and Hungarian PermReps noted the proposal's text on minority rights and called on the international community to ensure that the Kosovo authorities implement the necessary standards to ensure their protection.

The Latvian and Georgian PermReps stressed Kosovo's uniqueness and that it not be a precedent for resolution of other frozen conflicts.

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U.N IS NEXT STOP  
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¶6. (SBU) In responding to PermRep's inquiries on the process going forward, Ahtisaari stated that his aim is for complete unanimity in the Security Council on his proposal for final status and stressed the importance of not forgetting the tragic history of Kosovo and that present-day Serbia, although not directly responsible, cannot escape its past. Ahtisaari mentioned a telling anecdote: Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic complained that Serbia should not be punished for Milosevic's crimes; Ahtisaari replied that it could not be rewarded for them either. He warned of a greater danger of instability if there are prolonged negotiations stressing that the time had come for the Security Council to take on the responsibility. Ahtisaari promised the Council that he would use all that was necessary in order to achieve unity in the U.N. on this issue.

OLSON